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Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 NEA-09 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01

INR-07 L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-02

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R 231735Z JAN 75
FM AMEMBASSY LONDON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7537
INFO AMEMBASSY COLOMBO
AMEMBASSY DACCA
AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
AMEMBASSY KABUL
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

C O N F I D E N T I A L LONDON 01066

E.O.11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: PFOR, UK, PK
SUBJECT: UK-PAKISTAN RELATIONS: SQUABBLE OVER HONORARY DEGREE FOR BHUTTO

SUMMARY: BRITISH OFFICIALS ARE BEMOANING INSULT TO BHUTTO INHERENT IN SQUABBLE WHICH HAS BROKEN OUT OVER OXFORD UNIVERSITY PROPOSAL TO AWARD HIM HONORARY DEGREE. WHATEVER THE OUTCOME AT OXFORD, WE SUSPECT BRITISH WILL TRY TO MAKE AMENDS BY BEING MORE FORTHCOMING ON PAKISTAN'S NEXT REQUEST (WHETHER THAT BE ECONOMIC AID, DESIRE TO BUY MILITARY EQUIPMENT, OR SOMETHING ELSE). END SUMMARY.

1. UNEXPECTED SQUABBLE BROKE OUT IN OXFORD UNIVERSITY CONGREGATION MEETING JANUARY 20 WHEN HONORARY DEGREE FOR PRESIDENT BHUTTO (WHICH HAD BEEN WELL-PREPARED IN ADVANCE) WAS PUT TO CONGREGATION MEMBERS FOR FORMAL AP-PROVAL. ONE PROFESSOR GOMBRICH (WHO TEACHES SANSKRIT) LED WITH FIERY SPEECH OPPOSING ANY SUCH HONOR FOR A MAN WHO WAS DIRECTLY INVOLVED IN THE PAKISTANI AUTHORITIES' "ATTACK" ON DACCA UNIVERSITY IN 1971. APPROVAL WAS POST-

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PONED TO NEXT MEETING, SCHEDULED FEBRUARY 11.

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2. PRESS CHEWED ON THE STORY A BIT AND PAKISTANI AMBASSADOR DAULTANA CALLED ON FCO MINSTATE ENNALS YESTERDAY, JANUARY 23. DAULTANA EXPRESSED PRESIDENT BHUTTO'S INDIGNATION. HAD BHUTTO SUSPECTED SUCH CONTROVERSY, DAULTANA SAID, HE WOULD PROBABLY HAVE REFUSED TO EXPRESS WILLINGNESS TO RECEIVE HONORARY DEGREE. AS IT WAS, REFUSING DEGREE NOW WOULD ONLY TEND TO LEND CREDENCE TO PROFESSOR GOMBRICH'S MALIGNANT ACCUSATIONS. ENNALS AGREED THAT FCO WOULD TRY TO INVESTIGATE SITUATION AT OXFORD AND REPORT BACK.

3. OXFORD SITUATION AS FCO UNDERSTANDS IT IS THAT 75 VOTES AGAINST OUT OF THEORETICALLY POSSIBLE 2,000 IN CONGREGATION ARE ENOUGH TO STOP GRANTING OF HONORARY DEGREE. BRITISH DOUBT BENGALEE LOBBY CAN LINE UP THAT MANY BY FEBRUARY 11 (MEETING JANUARY 20 WAS ATTENDED BY ONLY 60 IN ALL) BUT THAT POSSIBILITY CANNOT BE ENTIRELY RULED OUT. FCO SUSPECTS AMBASSADOR DAULTANA WILL TAKE HIS OWN SOUNDINGS, AND ADVISE BHUTTO ON COURSE TO FOLLOW ACCORDINGLY.

4. MEANWHILE, FCO IS BEMOANING BLOW TO UK'S (ALREADY FRAGILE) RELATIONS WITH PAKISTAN, WHICH FCO HAS CAREFULLY BEEN TRYING TO REDEVELOP IN RECENT MONTHS. COMMENT: WE SUSPECT THAT WHATEVER OUTCOME OF THIS OXFORD AFFAIR MIGHT BE, HMG OFFICIALS WILL TRY TO MAKE UP FOR THE DAMAGE TO BHUTTO'S PRIDE BY BEING MORE FORTHCOMING THAN THEY MIGHT OTHERWISE HAVE BEEN ON WHATEVER MAY BE PAKISTAN'S NEXT REQUEST.

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